

Matters Arising 117

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 6 - 10 Feb 2023

Extre Care, Extra Reward

Q 8 4
Q 8
A 9 8 5 4 2
A J

Slam hands can be fun, daunting and rewarding. On this hand from Thursday Ken managed to rescue a good pairs score despite missing the slam.

13

A K J 7 3 2
A K J 10
--
9 7 5

The auction was
1D – 1S – 2D – 3H – 3S – 4S.
3H was necessary to create a game-forcing situation, after which 3S follows the principle of fast arrival in being stronger than 4S.

Ken, South, can smell slam, but any investigation could leave him in 5S losing 3 club tricks, so the reluctance to continue is understandable. The moment dummy hit he can see an easy 12 tricks - 6S, 4H and two minor suit Aces. Knowing he has missed slam he was determined to find a 13th trick to try to reduce the damage.

The only possible losers in his hand are in clubs, two of which go on dummy's Aces. After winning AC and cashing AS he knew trumps were at worst 3–1. Next came the KS bringing what for him was the good news of a 3–1 break. Leaving the QS on table he played 3 rounds of hearts, discarding JC, followed by ruffing a club with QS which he knew wasn't needed to draw the last trump. He then discarded his other club on AD as planned. Returning to hand with a diamond ruff, he was able to draw the last trump and claim the lot.

There was a small danger in this line that if hearts were 6–1 the defence could ruff the second round and restrict him to 11 tricks, but the odds are easily enough in his favour to take this risk to acquire 13 tricks.

Q 8 4
Q 8
A 9 8 5 4 2
A J

10
7 5 4
Q J 10 6 3
Q 10 8 2

9 6 5
9 6 3 2
K 7
K 6 4 3

A K J 7 3 2
A K J 10
--
9 7 5

13

All the other declarers woodenly drew 3 rounds of trumps and inevitable lost a club later for 12 tricks - everyone would have made 13 tricks on a 2–2 break.

Counting to 13

A K Q 10 4
A Q J
10 3
K Q 2

Holding the 21 point hand above I was debating whether to open 2NT, 1S or a Benji 2C when Alan, my partner, opened 1D. That leaves two questions to be resolved. Should we play in a small slam or a grand one, and in what denomination?

1S is sufficient at this point. It is forcing for one round, and the strength of partner's rebid is easier to read than if I start jumping around.

2S says Alan. We've agreed spades. 4NT from me, 2 Aces from Alan. 5NT. Note that this all but always means a search for a grand slam, and thus guarantees possession of all the Aces. Indeed for those playing Roman Key Card Blackwood it normally promises possession of all the key cards. It amuses me how often people ask for Aces, discover one missing, and still ask for Kings. It is just conceivable that having all the Kings might allow you to bid 6NT rather than a suit slam, but that doesn't normally seem to be its use.

Alan has two Kings. I can count 5 spade tricks, 3 in hearts (Alan must have KH), 2 in diamonds (Alan's promised A + K) and three clubs including Alan's promised Ace. That's 13 tricks, unless partner is missing JS and all the missing spades are on my left for I can pick up Jxxx on my right by finessing if LHO shows out on the first round. 7NT says I, knowing that even if partner doesn't have JS I'm still looking at a contract with a 95% chance of success.

My ability to count to 13 earned us a top as no-one else bid a grand slam.

9 8 6 2
K 7
A K 9 5 2
A 5

7 5
9 6 5 2
J 8 7
10 9 8 4

J 3
10 8 4 3
Q 6 4
J 7 6 3

A K Q 10 4
A Q J
10 3
K Q 2

21

Around The Club

This weeks winners were

Monday (7 tables): Mike Ollerton & Chris Banks

Tuesday F2F : (5 tables):

Helen Finch & Moira Williams

Tuesday BBO (7 tables):

Mary Sapsford & Vanessa Cordwell

Thursday (6 tables): Alan Wearmouth & Martyn Harris

Total 25 tables for the week.

Scoring 55% in an event last week or next qualifies players for the regional stages of the National pairs, which will be played online on 26th March, with Noational stage following also online on 15th and 16th April. All of the winners above passed the 55% threshold and so qualify for the Regional Finals if they wish, alongside

John Nicholls & Brian Smith,

Helen Smithson & Michael Ball,

Hilary Storey & Jacky Truelove,

Ray & Irene Gregory,

John & Wendy Ellwood,

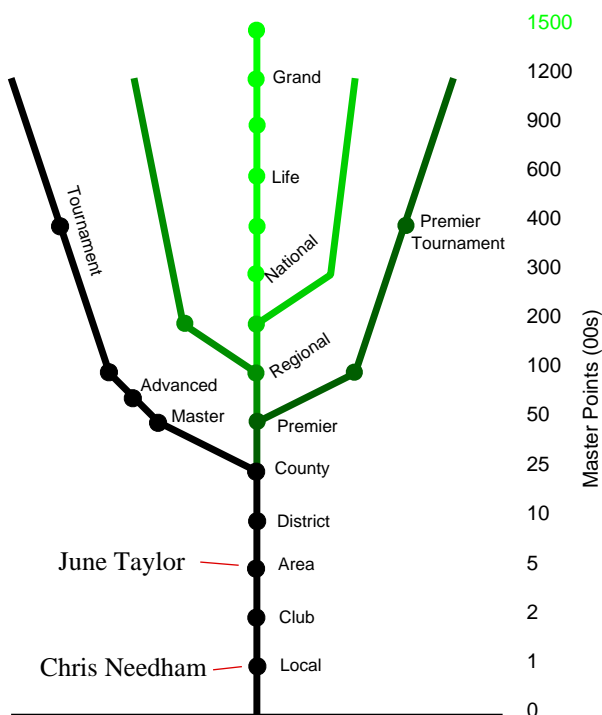
Charlotte Casson & Richard Brazier,

David & Shirley Harris,

Audry Cunningham & Phillip Russell,

Steve Douglas & Ken Orford.

During January there were Master Point promotions for June Taylor to Area Master and Chris Needham to Local Master.



Psuedo-Squeeze

	8 4	
	9 6 5 3	
	K 9 4	
	K 8 7 2	
J 3		A K Q 9 7 5 2
J 8		K Q 4 2
A J 8 6	18	3 2
A Q 5 4 3		--
	10 6	
	A 10 7	
	Q 10 7 5	
	J 10 9 6	

Six Easts played in spades. All made 12 tricks, which seems unremarkable as that is what the analysis says is possible, yet all defences were given a chance to win two tricks.

Declarer typically played their two small diamonds under dummy's Aces and drew trumps. It was in the play of hearts that the defence erred. At some tables South rose with the A when declarer led small towards table's J. Why? If partner can't beat the J declarer has KQ and South can win a trick later. Using the A to beat spot cards meant declarer had only one heart loser, reserving it to bash an honour allows the defence 2 heart tricks, assuming North defends correctly.

On this hand drawing trumps and running more in the hope that the defence make a bad discard is an example of a Psuedo-squeeze. The difference between this and a real squeeze is that with a psuedo-squeeze you hope for a wrong discard, with a real one a point comes when all discards are wrong. Psuedo-squeezes are most likely to work if you give away as little information as possible about the hand before running winners. On this hand declarer is only intending to lose the lead once, to AH, so can safely run all the trumps bar one before tackling hearts, using the one trump left to regain the lead.

After a diamond lead won on table followed by AC and 6 spades North should see to come down to 4 hearts and KC, relying on partner holding QD given the early play. On a club lead life is harder, as declarer leaves AD on table and runs 6 spades. North knows declarer is out of clubs from the discard at trick 1, but will still feel under pressure to hold 4 hearts, Kx D and KC in his last 6 cards. They may well not read declarer's hand sufficiently well to realise that xD can be jettisoned.

How does East make tricks without the help of the defence? The potential for losing 2 heart tricks after drawing trumps should be clear, so forget the bit about drawing trumps, and after ditching the diamonds on dummy's Aces play the JH and then if necessary the KH to knock-out the Ace. On regaining the lead a third round of hearts consists of a small from hand ruffed,

using JS if declarer is more concerned about a 5-2 heart break than a 4-0 trump one. Then draw trumps and enjoy the last heart honour later.

Note: 5-2 break is considerably more likely than a 4-0 one, so unless there is evidence in the play to suggest otherwise it is the 5-2 break that declarer should run scared of.

I welcome any comments or queries sent me at martyn@orpheusmail.co.uk though they may be used in future issues should I choose to produce such. Or they may not. You have been warned.

NB, I do try replying to mails raising a specific point, so if I seem to ignore you do check your spam folder after a day or three.

Martyn Harris
spadeilike on BBO